

# LORD HOWE ISLAND BOARD

## BUSINESS PAPER

### OPEN SESSION

#### Item

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Chief Executive Officer's report 14<sup>th</sup> September 22 – 25 November 25

#### Recommendations

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1. **Note** the Chief Executive Officer's report including attachments

#### Current position

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The following briefing provides an overview of highlights, risks and opportunities during the reporting period. It is reported under the six themes of the Board's Strategic Plan, and supported by detailed reports from the three business unit Senior Managers.

#### Effective Leadership and Governance

The Senior Leadership Team is stretched at the present time, with one Senior Manager role vacant and the responsibilities are being shared between the Senior Manager Business and Corporate Services (MBCS) Debbie Johnsen and the CEO. The third Senior Manager - Environment and Community Services is being filled on an acting capacity. In good news, that role has been filled and a new MECS is due to commence 09 January 23.

Across the establishment, 5 of the 6 second level managers are either vacant without backfill (1) or filled on an acting or temporary basis (4/6). Vacancies also exist at service delivery due to short term and new funding agreements requiring new positions, and turnover. Suffice to say, recruitment has been a major focus of the previous period and will be for the next few months.

The ability to report, monitor and manage WHS risks and incidents will improve markedly with the introduction of CAMMS tool. IT and email barriers have been resolved, and trainers will be on island from the 28<sup>th</sup> November to onboard the system with all team members.

Final approval for the Efficiency and Effectiveness Review implementation project is being sought, however some no-regrets actions are underway. Phase one of the discovery process for our IT systems review has been completed, and a report received to trigger the second phase.

#### *PMES Results*

Employee engagement is a key driver of productivity, and retention. The Department of Planning and Environment administers an employee engagement survey annually. The survey is a tool to monitor employee engagement, identify areas for improvement, and to celebrate

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success. The report (Attachment C) indicates an overarching employee engagement score of 55% was reported, up 5% since 2021. Significant improvements and high scores were recorded for role clarity and support (84%, up 19%), customer service (84%, up 16%) and job satisfaction (71%, up 25%).

The greatest area for improvement relates to feedback and performance management (24%). Training in the DPE system called "My Talent Plan", with associated KPI's and performance reviews, had been organised for September but will now be rescheduled for Quarter 3, when most senior and middle management roles are filled. The results will be presented to the staff at a staff meeting in late November. Staff will be invited to participate in working groups to explore the matters of recognition, employee voice and wellbeing / burnout that also scored poorly.

### *Diligent*

Diligent is a software product specifically designed for creating, distributing and collaborating on board meeting materials. As a cloud-based repository, the tool can be used to store a library of policies and other relevant governance documents, and past meeting papers. The product has a similar tab function as the current PDF document, however it is more user friendly. Board papers will be issued through Diligent for the next 12 months as a trial, at no cost to LHIB. Staff can assist load the app, log on and use the tool. Hard copies of the papers can still be issued at the request of members.

### LHIB Results

An overarching employee engagement score of 55% was reported, up 5% since 2021. Significant improvements and high scores were recorded for role clarity and support (84%, up 19%), customer service (84%, up 16%) and job satisfaction (71%, up 25%).

The greatest area for improvement relates to feedback and performance management (24%). Training in the DPE system called "My Talent Plan", with associated KPI's and performance reviews, had been organised for September, however our People Partner recommended postponing due to the turnover in the leadership team. Most senior and middle management roles should be filled by the first quarter of 2023, and this training will be rescheduled for then.

The results will be presented to the staff at a staff meeting in late November. Staff will be invited to participate in working groups to explore the matters of recognition, employee voice and wellbeing / burnout that also scored poorly.

### Sound Infrastructure and Services

Negotiations with Birdon regarding renewal of our shipping service continues, and an update is included in the papers. It is likely that an out of session meeting will be required to approve the terms of the new contract, expected to be finalised by end January. A procurement strategy for the longer-term marine freight service has been developed and is awaiting approval, and legal input is being secured for contract development.

The major road upgrade project is currently out for tender. With a supplier unlikely to be determined and in position to commence until Q4 next year, a contractor has been engaged to undertake critical repairs to minimise risk during the busy tourist season.

A report has been received in relation to an upgrade to the waste management facility (WMF). While the report ensures compliance with EPA license to operate the facility, significant capital

is required to implement the report. External funding opportunities will need to be sought to bring the facility to a reasonable standard.

## Outstanding Environment

Minor re-alignment of the Environment portfolio sees three team leaders comprising Biosecurity, Weeds and World Heritage now at level.

The dual focus for Biosecurity remains the ongoing monitoring and surveillance, and progressing the improvements to secure mainland facilities. A visit from Birdon's General Manager, Sarah Yuen, has seen positive progress in the dialogue around required improvements.

Weeding work continues with the onset of warmer weather and the removal of rodent suppression making ideal conditions for germination. 17 years into a 30 -year program of eradication means that weed search is challenging, as densities are reduced. Contractors continue to be used to bolster the efforts of permanent staff.

Unfortunately, a man died on Mt Gower recently within the Permanent Park Preserve, likely from a heart attack. A risk review being undertaken in collaboration with NPWS and the local certified contractors to ensure all is being done to ensure safety of hikers and minimisation of the Board's liability.

## Responsible Land Management

The backlog of DA and building application matters continues to be addressed. Options are being explored to seek an alternative to the Board providing certification services, in order to finalise many DA's and ensure compliance in to the future.

## Strong and Sustainable Economy

Tourism businesses appear to be back in full swing, with lodges at capacity well into the New Year.

Meetings with Lagoon tour operators were facilitated jointly with Marine Parks and NSW police to remind all of their compliance obligations, and encourage better cooperation and communication

## Support a Strong and Engaged Community

A small grant has been received under the Reconnecting NSW – Community Events Program, and planning is underway though an outsourced event manager. The aim of the program is to promote economic and social recovery post COVID 19. Four separate activities are envisaged over a 10-day period, likely coinciding with Discovery Day. They will involve music, cinema, children's entertainment, sport, food and beverage that celebrate Lord Howe Island and bring the community together around shared interests.

Submissions were invited regarding Telstra's proposed mobile phone tower, and a town-hall meeting held to enable the community to ask questions directly of the proponents. A consultation summary and results is the subject of a business paper.

## Attachments

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Attachment	Title
A	ECS report
B	IES report
C	Biosecurity Compliance
D	Summary of PMES Survey Results 2022 – Closed

## Approval and contact

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Approver	Position
Suzie Christensen	Chief Executive Officer
Preparer	Position
Suzie Christensen	Chief Executive Officer

# CEO BOARD REPORT

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENGINEERING SERVICES

### OPEN SESSION

#### Item

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This report is a brief summary of IES activities and issues covering the period October to December 2022.

#### Core Service Streams

1. Aerodrome Operations
2. WMF Operations
3. Electricity Generation and Distribution Operations

#### Major Projects, Major Maintenance Items and Procurements

4. Asset Management Plan
5. Environmental Protection Agency Visit
6. Roads Project – Pothole program

#### Summary of Activities and Issues

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##### 1. Aerodrome Operations

Maintenance and operations of the assets has continued over the period with no major interruptions encountered because of a need to deliver reactive maintenance at the site.

Due to the weather conditions on Lord Howe Island the primary windsock frame has been damaged, this resulted in a NOTAM being released on the 14/10/2022. Welding ops have been undertaking as an interim solution. The manufacture has noted that this is a rare occurrence but has happened previously on Abrolhos Island. As such, frames with reinforced struts will be provided to the LHIB free of charge to avoid future occurrences.

Commercial operators have continued to utilise the airstrip without experiencing interruptions from airstrip availability, however they have had a small number of their own interruptions due to various off-island issues occurring, such as mechanical issues including a fire in Sydney. In response, the LHIB will be conducting a tabletop emergency exercise followed by a LEMC meeting early next year. Weather over the period did result in a high number of flights being cancelled. Operators have suggested that the installation of cameras as an aviation-related service made available to pilots may help aid operators in monitoring the LHI aerodrome prior to cancelling flights. This option is currently being researched.

The Aerodrome has continued to support a number RAAF training exercise over the reporting period. RAAF aircraft often land after all commercial operations on a given day are complete. However, RAAF's continued requests results in a requirement by LHIB to make staff available outside of their usual bandwidth hours in low-light or no-light conditions at pay rates above normative at cost and risk to LHIB.

## **2. WMF Operations**

Operations have continued at the WMF. Staffing is currently under quota with full-time WMF staff being allocated to HDA outside the WMF. EOI for Field officers have been advertised to fill in for staff whilst on HDA.

MRA Consulting group conducted an on-site visit required to complete the WMF Upgrade Report. The report is currently in last stages of draft and has been submitted to EPA to meet license (PRP) requirements, and will be presented to the Board at its February meeting

Whilst onsite, MRA identified several WHS issues, including exposed electronics, unsafe lifting practices and usage of ladders without working platforms. These are currently being rectified.

The WMF HotRot has had 2 malfunctions within this reporting period. The Human-Machine Interface (HMI) stopped working meaning that compost was unable to be turned/aerated within the vessel. This led to stagnant material significantly increasing in temperature posing a potential hazard. WMF staff worked with HotRot and have now successfully installed remote operation capability onto the computer to minimize the risk if it occurs again. A new HMI has been installed and the fault was most likely caused as the HMI is open to the weather.

The HotRot gearmotors are currently under maintenance. An extra gearbox has been ordered so that maintenance can be carried out without interrupting day to day operations. New bins have been ordered to replace the islands supply of short wheel-based bins. These bins pose a WHS hazard to WMF staff as they are not suitable for the bin lifters and are required to be lifted overhead to empty.

An incident occurred on 17/11/22 resulting in a staff member receiving a laceration from corrugated iron. All correct PPE was being worn when the accident occurred. The staff member was cleared for work and WMF risk register has been updated.

## **3. Electricity Generation and Distribution Operations**

Work is underway to strip down and quote to repair the second spare generator motor. All other routine maintenance is being undertaken as per schedule.

Photon are finalising an asset management plan for the electricity network and solar array to form part of the overarching Asset Management Plan.

## **4. Asset Management Plan**

Matthew Greskie, MRA Consulting was engaged to create an online Asset Management Plan for the LHIB. The asset management plan will be available through NAMS+ which is a scalable online toolkit that will be able to streamline and simplify asset management planning. NAMS+ will allow not only the creation of an on-demand asset management plan but will also provide the board with a real-time view of asset life-cycles.

The work will complete a deliverable of the EER implementation plan, and will inform priorities for expenditure of our capital and maintenance budget for FY23, along with future budgeting. Early indications confirm the EER finding that LHIB revenue is currently insufficient to adequately maintain and renew current assets. The revised Asset Management plan will be presented to the February 2023 Board meeting.

## 5. Environmental Protection Agency Visit

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) visited Lord Howe Island from Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November – Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November and focussed on 3 main items:

1. Birdon Diesel Spill - LHIB Wharf / loading area & need for improved management & facilities.
2. Annual inspection of the LHIB WMF.
3. Site visits to LHIB owned septic systems classified as high risk.

A meeting was held with the Acting Team Leader Compliance / Waste & Projects to discuss the WMF PRP's, island wide septic maintenance and chemical storage. An island wide pump-out/maintenance schedule is currently being developed with the aid of Civcon and AIS. This plan cannot be implemented until high-risk board systems have been rectified and are routinely inspected. EPA personnel also reviewed the draft WMF upgrade plan with management.

## 6. Roads Project – Pothole Program

A delay in expected construction commencement of the roads project has occurred due to necessary procurement timeframes and processes. The condition of several roads have deteriorated heavily leading to safety concerns and public complaints. To ensure the safe operation of public roads on LHI and to manage staffing shortages LHIB has contracted AIS to conduct a “Lord Howe Island Pot Hole Program”. The program was independently reviewed by Engineer Matt Greskie, and will extend over a period of 18 days and will focus on roads that have been identified as a risk. Work will consist of the repair of roughly 6000m<sup>2</sup> of damaged roads with major works being performed on Lagoon Road from TC Douglas to the Post Office (Grade & Pack).

## Attachments

Attachment	Title
Nil	

## Approval and contact

<b>Approver</b>	<b>Position</b>
Suzie Christensen	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Preparer</b>	<b>Position</b>
Brad Josephs	A/ Team Leader Compliance/Waste & Projects

# CEO BOARD REPORT

## ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

### OPEN SESSION

#### Item

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This report is a brief summary of ECS activities and issues covering the period May to September 2022.

#### Core Service Streams

1. Biodiversity Management
2. Biosecurity
3. Weed Management
4. Threatened Plants
5. Visitor Infrastructure
6. Marine Management / Moorings
7. Environmental Assessment
8. Land Administration
9. Development Assessment and Land Use Planning

#### Major Projects, Major Maintenance Items and Procurements

1. Biosecurity (see separate paper xx)

#### Summary of Activities and Issues

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##### 1. Biodiversity Management

#### Operations

The next woodhen survey is scheduled for Monday 5 December – Friday 23 December 2022. The aim is to survey woodhen populations across the island, including the settlement. The previous survey in March 2022 recorded 778 individuals, the highest number recorded since the surveys began in 1985 and 180 more than what was recorded in November 2021. Due to the steady increase in the population, management will be seeking advice from specialised fauna survey ecologists regarding the future of the census survey. Management would like to explore alternative options for monitoring the population to ensure the ongoing protection of the species while minimising intervention activities.

As part of the walking track and ropes audit, some of the ropes on the Gower track have been repaired. The Environment Team continues to work with tour operators to monitor rope condition.

Goat House Walking Track remediation work commenced in late October. Work is progressing well and is on track for completion by the end of the year.

The island continues to be busy with visiting researchers. The priority at the moment is completing the Biodiversity Benefits Monitoring Projects following the completion of the Rodent Eradication Program. The Board has partnered with scientists in the Department of



Planning and Environment to complete the work so that we can understand how the environment is responding to the absence of rodents.

### **Staffing**

Hank Bower, Manager Environment and World Heritage resigned from his position and left the LHIB in late September. Following a request for expressions of interest, Cristina Venables will be filling a revised role of Team Leader Environment and World Heritage on a short-term contract until June 30 2023.

Recruitment to fill vacancies in the Environmental team has been finalised with a Field Supervisor position awarded to Sam Filetti, and two Field Officer roles to Blake Thompson and Riley Wilson.

## **2. Biosecurity**

### **MV Island Trader rodent incident**

The first voyage in September was postponed due to the presence of a rat on the ship on the morning of departure. The rat was detected on a monitoring camera entering the ship and it could not be confirmed whether it left or remained on the ship. For this reason, the ship was unloaded and a 7-day period with no rodent presence was required in order for the ship to sail. This response was in line with a similar situation in 2021.

Additional Eastern Air freight planes were organised by private customers on the island while the RAAF provided a Hercules to bring additional gas supplies and resident's perishable food to the island. Ongoing improvement work at the Birdon Freight Facility to decrease the likelihood of a recurrence of this type of event is being undertaken.

### **Staffing**

Leave and absences during September and October supplemented by contract mainland dog handlers to carry out some core biosecurity work

Securing ongoing funding for the program through the recent NSW government funding has meant that staffing can now be secure for the next 4 years. Recruitment was finalised for the Administration Officer and Ashley Hoper has been appointed until June 30<sup>th</sup> 2026. Two Biosecurity Officer positions were awarded to Chad Wilson and Bree Potter and a third is being finalised.

Biosecurity Team Leader, Chris Birmingham has tendered his resignation effective from mid-January. Originally recruited for 5 months in early 2022, his contract was extended recently in line with the Biosecurity NPP. Chris and family have decided to return to New Zealand where they are currently building a house. We thank Chris and Linda for their contribution to not only the LHIB, but also to the community and wish them and Ollie and Nina the best.

Further recruitment under the NPP funding is currently underway for a Senior Biosecurity Officer, as well as Communications and GIS Officers who will work across the Board but have significant responsibilities within the Biosecurity team.

### **Dog Searches and monitoring**

Dog searches took place in September and October using teams from Tate Animals and Mark Holdsworth. Coverage of the settlement area was down due to availability of staff and

contractors. No rodent detections were made during these two periods. New handler teams have been recruited for December checks which bolsters our contractor capacity. An expression of interest for this ongoing work in 2023 will be circulated more widely within the conservation dog network in an effort to build some further contingency into this program. All other monitoring has found no confirmed rodent presence.

Planes and vessels continue to be checked as per schedule and no biosecurity issues were detected in this period.

## **Dogs**

Willow continues to wow her new handlers. Feedback from other experienced handlers and trainers is that she is really going to be a valuable asset in years to come. Zuma's injury remains an issue and phasing him out of active service is the most likely scenario. We are currently investigating retirement plans and replacements for both Sebbi and Zuma. Sebbi is still going well but will need to be replaced at some stage in the medium term. A replacement dog around the same age as Willow will be trialled on the island from mid-January, and further dog opportunities are currently being explored. This includes fully trained dogs and the use of contracted dog handler teams to backfill until our own handlers are up to speed in the first quarter of 2023.

## **Qantas and Eastern Air Services**

Biosecurity consultant Graeme Beech has continued to build on good progress with Qantas management regarding improved biosecurity, getting in behind the scenes at the Qantas Freight Facility to understand the risk profile. Plans are being made to carry out some monitoring work to quantify this risk. Engagement with Eastern Air Services has begun and the team will continue to work with them to improve biosecurity processes.

## **3. Weed Management**

### **Operations**

The LHI Weed Eradication Program dashboard updates for this financial year include 3,937.95 hours of effort across 109.45 hectares with a total distance of 2172.7 kilometres travelled from both LHIB staff and contract labour.

Teams have been focusing search efforts in the Northern Hills to target Bridal Creeper before the plant sets fruit. Other areas of focus include landscape units Lidgbird South, Intermediate Hill and the Northern Settlement.

A contract team comprised of both mainland and local staff was recently engaged to work alongside the local Weed Eradication team for 3 weeks. This significantly increased the hectares covered and has allowed completion of four blocks in the Northern Hills before Bridal Creeper lays dormant for the summer season.

A helicopter winch program is scheduled for February pending suitable weather conditions.

The table overleaf lists total weeds treated between 1<sup>st</sup> September – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022.

Species	Seedling	Juvenile	Young Mature	Peak Mature	Reshoot
African Boxthorn	0	1	0	1	0
African Olive	0	0	0	0	2
African Plum	0	3	1	0	0
Bitou Bush	51	15	11	2	0
Black Passionfruit	0	9	2	0	0
Blue Passionflower	0	0	1	0	0
Brazilian Cherry	0	1	0	0	0
Bridal Creeper	50	249	37	9	1
Camphor Laurel	7	9	0	5	10
Castor Oil Plant	0	5	0	0	0
Cherry Guava	152	665	44	10	18
Climbing Asparagus Fern	64	162	20	5	3
Coffee	0	1	0	0	0
Cotoneaster	0	5	0	0	0
Cunjevoi	0	3	0	3	0
Flame Tree	0	4	1	0	0
Ginger Lily	0	1	0	0	0
Ground Asparagus	1142	1429	95	25	0
Hibiscus	0	1	0	0	0
Holly Fern	2	2	0	2	0
Indian Hawthorn	0	1	0	0	0
Lady-Of-The-Night / Night Jasmine	3	22	1	0	0
Lantana	0	0	1	0	0
Lemon (Wild)	0	2	0	0	0
Madeira Vine	57	53	14	7	
Norfolk Pine	1231	602	1	0	0
Ochna	1	27	2	1	0
Palm Grass	2	5	0	0	0
Papaya / Pawpaw	5	22	7	5	0
Peach	0	2	0	0	0
Privet - Narrow-Leaf	0	2	0	0	0
Rhus Tree	0	0	1	0	0
Rice Paper Plant	0	1	0	0	0
Silky Oak	0	1	0	0	0
Spanish Bayonet	0	25	0	0	0
Sweet Pittosporum	0	38	3	0	0
Tobacco Bush	84	309	83	17	0
Umbrella Tree	0	4	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2851</b>	<b>3681</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>34</b>

## Staffing

Sue Bower, Team Leader – Flora & Weeds resigned from her position and left the LHIB in late September. Nicola Fuller is currently acting in this role with the recruitment process for this position due to be complete by the end of November.

Recruitment for additional Bush Regenerators is currently underway, with a full team expected to be operating from early 2023.

## Threatened plants

Threatened plant recovery actions continue to be implemented according to the LHI Saving Our Species (SOS) program; now running a five-year contract period, with funding availability subject to yearly reporting.

Several threatened plant surveys across the Southern Mountains are due to be completed in December.

## 4. Environmental Assessment

Ecological assessments for all OC / DAs referred were completed

Tree risk assessments completed.

## 5. Land Administration

See business papers.

## 6. Development Assessment and Land Use planning

See business papers

## Attachments

Attachment	Title
Nil	

## Approval and contact

Approver	Position
Suzie Christensen	Chief Executive Officer
Preparer	Position
Darcelle Matassoni	Acting Senior Manager Environment and Community Services

# LORD HOWE ISLAND BIOSECURITY COMPLIANCE UPDATE (SEP-NOV 2022)

## Background

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Lord Howe Island biosecurity compliance update (Sep-Nov 2022).

## Background

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Biosecurity procedures, practices, and resources are in an active update and development phase post rodent response in 2021 and the announcement of the Biosecurity NPP funding. Progress has since been made on improving biosecurity delivery with a strong emphasis on staff recruitment and training to increase our capacity. In addition to this a strong focus has been on improving biosecurity efficacy at mainland points of departure. The Biosecurity Strategy 2022-26 was endorsed and accepted by the Board.

This update encompasses the period from September – November 2022.

## Current Position

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### RODENT

Most recent confirmed Rodent Sign: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021

#### Rat on a rodent (ROAR) Reports:

Months	Reports	Evidence Collections	Outcome
September - November 22	1	1	No rodent activity observed by LHI Biosecurity Team.

Any reports are investigated. Evidence collections are only undertaken when the initial report contains sufficient evidence to justify further investigation.

### VESSELS AND AIRCRAFT INSPECTIONS

- There has been a high inspection rate of vessels and aircraft arriving to Lord Howe Island. Only one plane was not met by biosecurity staff, this was a charter flight by EAS that we were not informed about.

	Month	Aircraft			Vessels	
		Qantas	Private	Eastern	Private	Commercial
2022	September	50	4	47	10	1 visit from NSW Police vessel
	October	60	7	48	10	
	November (until 18 <sup>th</sup> )	37	4	27	11	
	% Met	100%	100%	99.9%	100%	

Table 1 Inspections carried out in last 3 months

- There have been 11 voyages since July. Five of these have resulted in positive discoveries of biosecurity risk matter at the Lord Howe Island end, categorized below. The significant volume of work funded and undertaken by the Board at the Port Macquarie end has contributed to an overall decrease in
- Port Macquarie (PMQ) (Birdon) Interceptions of potential invasive species:

Risk category	Percentage of voyages since July 2022	Species/type present at Birdon shed and surrounds or in freight
High	60%	Rodents/frogs/reptiles
Medium	80%	Spiders, snail, centipede, earwigs, moths, seeds
Low	80%	Organic matter, dirt, etc

- LHI Interceptions of potentially invasive species/risks

Risk category	Percentage of voyages since July 2022	Species/type
High	10%	Frog x 1
Medium	50%	Spiders, snail, centipede, earwigs, seeds
Low	40%	Organic matter, dirt, etc

In early September a rodent was detected on board the Island Trader on the morning of departure. The voyage was cancelled due to the amount of time required to provide confidence that the ship was rodent free. The team is working with Birdon to complete improvement work that will limit this potential in the future. Work is also underway with DPI and Birdon to streamline the process and develop better contingency plans, and inform stakeholders of these processes.

## BIOSECURITY DOGS

- Springer Spaniel Sebbi is still performing well. Unfortunately Springer Spaniel Zuma suffered a broken front leg while carrying out field work and has had ongoing issues during his recovery. It is likely he will not be at full capacity for field work again and is currently only able to carry out work at the airport.
- A retirement plan for both Sebbi and Zuma is being drawn up and it is probable both dogs will be phased out of active service.
- The new Cocker Spaniel 'Willow' has been on the island since August and her training is going very well. She will most likely be in an active service by early 2023.
- Another young dog is being sourced and will be trialled in January 2023 to assess suitability for the island and associated work.
- Further puppies and/or fully trained dogs are also being sourced now to allow a smooth transition out of active service for our older dogs without too much disruption to the program
- There has been a requirement to contract additional contract dogs and/or handlers in to cover injuries etc and this has incurred additional cost to the Board
- A new kennel facility is currently being scoped with potential for construction to begin in the new year.

## **SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING**

- Weekly and monthly monitoring of the static device network across the island has been completed in November
- Camera monitoring has been completed and images inspected and analysed.
- Settlement searches using rodent detection dog teams have taken place since September.
- No rodent detections have been made
- It has been noted that there are some deficiencies in our data collection systems which has made it problematic to extract data easily for reporting purposes. We are working to improve this currently and align our data inputs and outputs for better reporting outcomes.

## **BUDGET UPDATE**

Current operational forecasting is projecting a variance of \$71,000 this financial year. This overspend has come about for several reasons.

- The rodent on the Island Trader incident in September meant that additional biosecurity checking was required at Port Macquarie as well as facilitating the movement of island freight via the RAAF
- Due to dog injuries and staff absences, contractor backfill was required to cover routine biosecurity work on island for checking of planes and ships.
- Although new biosecurity officers have been recruited and a new dog is in training (with one more to come) it is not expected that we will be at full capacity until February 2023 at the earliest. For this reason, a contract dog team to be based on the island from the end of this year for 2-3 months. This team will carry out routine biosecurity work and provide training and mentorship for new staff to bring them up to speed. This will build capacity and resilience more quickly in the Lord Howe Island biosecurity team and significantly reduce the dependence on external contractors moving forward.
- The predicted overspend in the Biosecurity OPEX budget is being reviewed to identify if cost savings can be made to reabsorb the variance over the coming months.

**Prepared:** Chris Birmingham, Team Leader Biosecurity